

SMARTING from Saturday's defeat against Tooting, Wycombe Wanderers raced back to form with a vengeance on Tuesday night when they travelled to Staines and ended the home side's unbeaten record in convincing style.

With three wins and three draws Staines were the only undefeated side in the Premier Division of the Isthmian League. But Wanderers made them look ordinary as they raced into a 2-0 lead and although Eggie James pulled it back to 2-1, Blues substitute Steve Pratt broke away to put the result beyond doubt.

As expected Farouki Quirishi made his debut in midfield but there was a surprise for Wycombe followers when Roger Day was named alongside him. Day had been signed on Monday and the former England amateur international brought a good deal of experience to midfield. As for Quirishi, he showed plenty of skill and some nice touches. Howard Kennedy and John Priestley were the players to stand down.

Manager John Reardon resisted the temptation to pull Paul Birdseye back into defence and his decision was soon justified as Birdseye drove in a glorious free kick to give Wanderers the lead. The improved form of Bob Davies at right back could mean Birdseye will stay in that position for some time.

The manager also pushed Mick Holfield into a forward role from midfield and he, too, capped a fine performance with his first goal of the season. Holfield's switch looked a useful move for it gave

By STUART EARP: Staines Town 1, Wycombe Wanderers 3

Wycombe more width on the left where Vass, Quirishi and Holfield supported each other well in the first half.

Mind you, things didn't go smoothly to start with as Wanderers struggled to knit as a team. Their major problem of giving the ball away was much in evidence again as passes failed to find their mark. After the first goal, however, the confidence began to flow.

BRILLIANT JAMES

Eggie James, Staines highly talented coloured striker, produced a flash of brilliance after 19 minutes when he sprinted between two defenders, beat another and then thrashed in a shot which John Maskell did well to parry. Wycombe's first reply took 26 minutes, when Tony Horseman's flighted free

kick was tipped over by Dave Collyer.

A minute later Day was fouled five yards outside the box. He took the free kick himself and fouched it to Birdseye who checked and then unleashed a dipping drive into the top of the net from 22 yards. It was a classic way to open his season's account.

This was the first time the Blues had scored first in all eight league games this season and the effect of the team was soon apparent. The defence, with Keith Mead and Alan Phillips to the fore, began to play themselves out of difficult situations with some nice first time passing and the whole side looked far more confident.

After 37 minutes that confidence brought another goal when Holfield cashed in on a

defensive error to make it 2-0. Brendan O'Sullivan tried to find his 'keeper as Dylan Evans played the ball through, but his back pass lacked weight. Holfield was on it in a flash and coolly took the ball around Collyer and planted it into the net. This goal was a clear example of how chances should be taken and although Wycombe had an anxious moment before the interval, it meant that Wanderers went in at half time with a distinct advantage.

The one desperate moment came in the 39th minute when James headed firmly for goal and beat Maskell but Mead was on the line to boot clear.

POINT BLANK

Holfield almost increased the lead seconds into the new half but Staines sensed that they had

to score early to stand a chance of salvaging their record. Raising the work rate they began to put more pressure on the visitors defence and Peter Beasant should have scored from point blank range but he headed Peter Osborne's cross wide.

James made no such mistake in the 60th minute, however. Osborne got up well to nod on Beasant's cross and James made the most of some lax marking to head past Maskell at the far post. Two minutes later Rob Williams, the former Blues defender, was booked for checking Holfield as he burst through. It was not a serious foul but referee Ward must have felt it denied Wycombe a possible goal which certainly looked the case.

This was the pattern of the second half as Staines pushed up almost to half way. At first both Holfield and substitute Pratt were caught off side but Staines paid dearly when Pratt eventually sprinted away to score a solo goal.

Before that, however, Wanderers' defence had to soak up considerable pressure from the home side. The back four has been pretty good at that situation this season but the difference now was that the front players were holding the ball up and taking some of the weight off the defence.

It was in the 83rd minute that Pratt raced on to Birdseye's long clearance. With the defence back pedalling, Pratt shrugged off Beasant's challenge and ran on but the ball bobbled awkwardly on the poor surface. Collyer came out but Pratt ran wide and slotted home a fine individual goal.

Pratt was through again in the closing stages but this time he was brought down with a hefty thump by a Staines defender. By then, however, Wanderers were home and dry to a morale boosting victory — their best of the season so far.

STAINES: D. Collyer, B. O'Sullivan, R. Williams, P. Shaw, J. Love, A. Rowlands, R. Hynes, P. Beasant, A. Waugh, P. Osborne, E. James. Sub G. Hare (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, R. Davies, K. Mead, A. Phillips, S. Vass, P. Birdseye, R. Day, F. Quirishi, A. Horseman (sub S. Pratt 67 mins), D. Evans, M. Holfield.

Referee: A. Ward (Southgate).

Half-time: 0-2. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Birdseye (27), Holfield (37), Pratt (83). Staines — James (60).

Manager Reardon's happy problem

THE acquisition of two new players this week has left Wycombe Wanderers manager John Reardon with a problem. But it is a problem he welcomes as he selects his side to visit Hendon tomorrow (Saturday) in the Isthmian League Premier Division.

The new men are former England amateur international Roger Day and former Slough player Farouki Quirishi. Both made their debuts in the Blues creditable 3-1 victory at Staines on Tuesday night and both did enough to keep their places in tomorrow's team. Mr Reardon must decide whether to recall Graham Mackenzie, who is now back from holiday.

Steve Pratt, who scored the third goal at Staines, is also pressing for a full game after some useful performances as substitute.

Day and Quirishi, who will both be non-contract players, bring the squad strength up to 18 which introduces some much needed competition for places in

the side. Day's stay at Loakes Park may be a short one as his position will be reviewed after a month.

One player who is unhappy at Loakes Park at the moment is goalkeeper Peter Spittle. He has been out on the transfer list at his own request after being dropped after the Sutton game a fortnight ago. Spittle played three matches in goal for the Blues this season and proved a most useful 'keeper.

Tomorrow's game was rearranged earlier this week. Wycombe's original opponents were Enfield but as they are involved in the F.A. Cup, the game was switched to Hendon. Wanderers have already beaten Hendon this season at Loakes Park when they won 2-1 with se-

cond half goals from Howard Kennedy and Dylan Evans.

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

(Up to and inc 13/9/77)

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|----|----|-----|
| Tooting | 8 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 5 | 21 |
| Enfield | 8 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 18 | 6 | 19 |
| Dagenham | 8 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 17 | 10 | 18 |
| Hitchin | 7 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 16 |
| Carshalton | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 16 | 9 | 14 |
| Sutton | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 14 |
| Barking | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 8 | 13 |
| Wycombe | 8 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 11 | 10 | 13 |
| Leatherhead | 8 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 4 | 12 |
| Staines | 7 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 12 |
| Hendon | 8 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 10 | 9 |
| Hayes | 8 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 9 |
| Boreham W | 7 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 11 | 14 | 9 |
| Kingstonian | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 8 |
| Walthamstow | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Southall | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 10 | 8 |
| Croydon | 8 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 7 |
| Leytonstone | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 5 |
| Tilbury | 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 13 | 5 |
| Slough | 6 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 11 | 2 |
| Woking | 7 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 16 | 1 |
| Stortford | 8 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 23 | 1 |